

## **Design, Estimating and Construction (DEC) Reviews Q&As**

April 22, 2013

### **What are DEC Reviews?**

DEC Reviews are expert team oversight reviews of large Reclamation technical projects. The teams usually consist of a Team Leader and 3 to 4 Team Members. The Team Members have technical expertise and experience in areas applicable to the project, e.g., construction, cost estimations, water conveyance, etc.

### **Why does Reclamation perform DEC Reviews?**

Reclamation determined that oversight reviews of major projects are required to ensure that cost estimates are appropriate, there are no major technical flaws, and project risks and uncertainties are identified and addressed. DEC Reviews give management (and ultimately our stakeholders) more assurance that these large water resource projects are going to be technically successful and cost estimates reflect what these projects are actually going to cost to build.

### **How have previous DEC Reviews helped Reclamation?**

- In reviewing studies (appraisal, feasibility), DEC Reviews identified major parts of projects (and cost estimates) that were not at an appropriate level of detail for consideration by Reclamation management or appropriation of funds
- Identified construction sequence problems and constructability issues
- Identified need for a Project Management Team on complex project
- Identified technical problems and uncertainties
- Found that cost estimates for land acquisition and cultural resources needed to be increased
- Identified the need to reprice a project cost estimate rather than relying on cost indexing

### **What projects should have DEC Reviews?**

- If a project has significant technical content (design/construction/rehabilitation) and is over \$10 million in total cost, a DEC Review must be performed.
- Without limitation of total costs, projects that are politically sensitive or may represent a significant risk to Reclamation, a DEC Review may be considered.

### **At what stage in a project's life should a DEC Review be performed?**

DEC Reviews are normally performed at the end of feasibility. However, a DEC Review could be completed any time it would add value to management or the project. DEC Reviews should be considered if it is believed that project stakeholders are going to seek Congressional authorization or alternative (e.g., State) funding before feasibility (e.g., appraisal) or at any time a cost estimate is being represented to the public.

### **What parts of a project are within the scope of the DEC Review?**

- Feasibility technical paragraphs, drawings, analyses, and drawings
- Cost estimates
- Technical assumptions
- Peer review processes
- Items that have a major impact on project costs
- Environmental mitigation costs

### **What parts of a project are generally considered outside the scope of a DEC Review?**

- Planning assumptions/decisions
- Preferred alternative decision

- Environmental Impact Statement decisions (except to identify items which contribute to total cost)
- Records of Decisions and other management decisions

#### **What is the process for a DEC Review?**

1. When a project is on the approved current year DEC Review list and ready to begin, the DEC Office initiates a conference call with the DEC Review Project Contact to discuss overall planning for the DEC Review. The initial call should be 2 to 3 months before the projected DEC Review site visit.
2. A Service Agreement between the DEC Office and DEC Review Project Contact is developed and approved.
3. The DEC Office assigns a Team Leader and assembles the DEC Team.
4. Project Data are provided to the DEC Team no later than two weeks prior to the onsite DEC Review.
5. The DEC Review Team travels to the project/site where there is a technical briefing on the project, a site visit, and the team develops the draft DEC Review report.
6. A briefing is provided to Management by the DEC Review Team of their draft findings and recommendations.
7. Design team and others submit consolidated comments on the draft report to the DEC Review Team.
8. The DEC Review Team incorporates comments and the Senior Advisor, DEC sends out a final DEC Review report.
9. Region/design team/project/area office and DEC Regional Coordinator develop a draft response to each DEC Review report recommendation and draft a Regional Director position for each response. These are sent by memorandum or e-mail to the Senior Advisor, DEC.
10. The Senior Advisor, DEC and Regional Director work together to finalize the regional responses and develop a joint position to address each recommendation. The responses and joint positions are documented in a memorandum, which is signed by both and transmitted to the Deputy Commissioner, Operations.
11. If for any reason the Regional Director and Senior Advisor, DEC are not in agreement, the matter will be elevated to the Deputy Commissioner, Operations for a final decision documented in writing.

#### **How long does a DEC Review take?**

Planning takes ideally 2 months, but has been done in as little as 1 month. The DEC Review Team's data review and site visit take a total of 2 weeks. Comments back to the DEC Review Team and incorporation take 1 to 2 months. Management consideration of the findings and decision can take from 1 to 4 months. The entire DEC Review from start to finish can take from 3 to 7 months.

#### **How much does a DEC Review cost?**

From \$50,000 to \$100,000 depending on the number and cost of team participants.